

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend Claims 1-24, as indicated below. The following is a complete listing of claims and replaces all prior versions and listings of claims in the present application:

Claim 1 (currently amended): A method of administering a promotional contest, the method comprising [[the]] steps of:

establishing a subset of a plurality of items produced by a manufacturer, wherein each item of the subset includes a winning code unique to the subset;

providing to a consumer an item from the plurality of items, wherein the item includes a contest code;

enabling the consumer to input the contest code into a prize redemption system;

electronically validating the contest code to determine whether the contest code is an active code in the promotional contest; and

if the contest code is found to be valid based on a result of the validating step, then determining whether the valid contest code inputted by the consumer matches the winning code thus entitling the consumer to receive a prize associated with the winning code.

Claim 2 (currently amended): [[A]] The method according to Claim 1, wherein the consumer inputs the contest code via the Internet or via a telephone.

Claim 3 (currently amended): [[A]] The method according to Claim 1, wherein the consumer inputs the contest code at a kiosk.

Claim 4 (currently amended): [[A]] The method according to Claim 1, wherein the step of establishing the subset occurs before the step of enabling the consumer to input the contest code.

Claim 5 (currently amended): [[A]] The method according to Claim 1, wherein the step of establishing the subset occurs after a plurality of contest codes have been inputted into the prize redemption system by consumers, and wherein the winning code is selected from the plurality of inputted contest codes.

Claim 6 (currently amended): [[A]] The method according to Claim 1, wherein the item provided to the consumer is covered by packaging material, and wherein the contest code is viewable by opening the packaging material.

Claim 7 (currently amended): [[A]] The method according to Claim 1, wherein the subset includes at least one item from the plurality of items.

Claim 8 (currently amended): A server operable to run a prize redemption program in which a consumer has previously been provided with an item from a plurality of produced by a manufacturer, wherein the item includes a contest code, the server being operable at least to:

enable the consumer to input the contest code into a prize redemption system;

electronically validate the contest code to determine whether the contest code is an active code in a promotional contest; and

if the validated contest code was found to be valid, then determine whether the valid contest code inputted by the consumer matches a winning code unique to a subset of the plurality of items thus entitling the consumer to receive a prize associated with the winning code.

Claim 9 (currently amended): [[A]] The server according to Claim 8, wherein the subset is established before the consumer is able to input the contest code.

Claim 10 (currently amended): [[A]] The server according to Claim 8, wherein the subset is established after a plurality of contest codes have been inputted into the prize redemption system by consumers, and wherein the winning code is selected from the plurality of inputted contest codes.

Claim 11 (currently amended): [[A]] The server according to Claim 8, wherein the item provided to the consumer is covered by packaging material, and wherein the contest code is viewable by opening the packaging material.

Claim 12 (currently amended): [[A]] The server according to Claim 8, wherein the subset includes at least one item from the plurality of items.

Claim 13 (currently amended): A computer-readable medium having stored thereon computer code for causing a server to execute a method of administering a promotional contest in which a consumer has previously been provided with an item from a plurality of items produced by a manufacturer, wherein the item includes a contest code, the method comprising [[the]] steps of:

enabling the consumer to input the contest code into a prize redemption system;  
validating the contest code to determine whether the contest code is an active code in the promotional contest; and  
if the contest code is found to be valid based on a result of the validating step,  
then determining whether the valid contest code inputted by the consumer matches a winning code unique to a subset of the plurality of items thus entitling the consumer to receive a prize associated with the winning code.

Claim 14 (currently amended): [[A]] The computer-readable medium according to Claim 13, wherein the subset is established before the step of enabling the consumer to input the contest code.

Claim 15 (currently amended): [[A]] The computer-readable medium according to Claim 13, wherein subset is established after a plurality of contest codes have been inputted into the prize redemption system by consumers, and wherein the winning code is selected from the plurality of inputted contest codes.

Claim 16 (currently amended): [[A]] The computer-readable medium according to Claim 13, wherein the item provided to the consumer is covered by packaging material, and wherein the contest code is viewable by opening the packaging material.

Claim 17 (currently amended): [[A]] The computer-readable medium according to Claim 13, wherein the subset includes at least one item from the plurality of items.

Claim 18 (currently amended): An apparatus for administering a promotional contest in which a consumer has been provided access to an item from a plurality of items produced by a manufacturer, wherein the item includes a contest code, the apparatus comprising:

means for enabling the consumer to input the contest code into a prize redemption system;

means for electronically validating the contest code to determine whether the contest code is an active code in the promotional contest; and

means for, if the contest code is found to be valid based on a result of the validating, then determining whether the valid contest code inputted by the consumer matches a winning code unique to a subset of the plurality of items thus entitling the consumer to receive a prize associated with the winning code.

Claim 19 (currently amended): [[An]] The apparatus according to Claim 18, wherein the consumer inputs the contest code via the Internet or via a telephone.

Claim 20 (currently amended): [[An]] The apparatus according to Claim 18, wherein the consumer inputs the contest code at a kiosk.

Claim 21 (currently amended): [[An]] The apparatus according to Claim 18, wherein the subset is established before the consumer is able to input the contest code.

Claim 22 (currently amended): [[An]] The apparatus according to Claim 18, wherein the subset is established after a plurality of contest codes have been inputted into the prize redemption system by consumers, and wherein the winning code is selected from the plurality of inputted contest codes.

Claim 23 (currently amended): [[An]] The apparatus according to Claim 18, wherein the item provided to the consumer is covered by packaging material, and wherein the contest code is viewable by opening the packaging material.

Claim 24 (currently amended): [[An]] The apparatus according to Claim 18, wherein the subset includes at least one item from the plurality of items.